

## Historical & Professionals' Paradigm of Pakistan Penal Code Pertaining to the Press

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### Abstract

*Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) is the legacy of the colonial era, but after the independence of Pakistan, such amendments were made in the sections of PPC pertaining to the press which further imposed restrictions on the freedom of the press. Many cases against the press had been registered under the relevant sections during different regimes in Pakistan. This article is an attempt to study the perception of the media professionals regarding these sections of PPC. The methodology of document study and survey was employed to collect the relevant data. This paper suggests that there is a need to review PPC particularly those sections pertaining to the press to extend the scope of the freedom of the press as per requirements of free, enlightened, moderate and democratic Pakistan.*

**Key Words:** *Pakistan Panel Code, Press, Media Professional, Scope of Freedom*

### 1. Introduction

*The Pakistan Penal Code usually called PPC is a penal code for all offences charged in Pakistan. Definitions in the Code to be understood are subject to exceptions. Throughout this Code every definition of an offence, every penal provision and every illustration of every such definition or penal provision, shall be understood subject to the exceptions. Before the Partition the Government of India constituted a Law Commission to prepare a Penal code, of which Lord Macaulay was the President. The first draft of Penal code prepared by the said commission was presented to Governor General of India in 1837. Sir Burnes Peacock, Chief Justice and Puisne Judges of Calcutta High Court revised the draft and completed the task in 1850. The legislative council passed it in October 1860, and under section 18(3) of the Independence Act 1947, Penal Code, 1860 was adapted by Pakistan "until other provision is made by the laws of legislative", but Pakistan has not so far framed its own penal code and the penal code enacted in 1860 by foreign rulers is still being followed in Pakistan as the law*

*of crimes of the land. Though a good number of amendments have been made to suit the changed conditions but the fact remains that its basic principles and fundamentals have very little effect of the change (Bajwa, 1992).*

*The sections of the Pakistan Penal code relating to the Press are mentioned here briefly. Section 123-A states that whoever condemns the creation of Pakistan or advocates the curtailment or abolition of the sovereignty of Pakistan shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment up to ten years and shall be liable to fine (Bajwa, 1992 p.133). This section was instituted in 1950. This institution seems to be made in the perspective of a court decision regarding a case in which the court upheld the action of the Government taken against Urdu weekly Jarida Al-Islah Lahore. The weekly had reproduced the manifesto of Islam League Party founded by Allama Mashraqi that condemned the creation of Pakistan (abdul, 1952).*

*Section 124-A is related to sedition, which states that whoever brings into hatred or contempt the Government shall be punished with up to imprisonment for life to which fine may be added. The explanation of this section says that comments expressing disapprobation of the measures of the Government with a view to obtain their alteration by lawful means without exciting hatred, contempt or dissatisfaction does not constitute an offence. The Press can take the advantage of this explanation and a journalist may comment expressing disapprobation of the measures of the Government with a view to obtain their alteration by lawful means, but he must do so without attempting to excite hatred and disaffection (AIR, 1952).*

*Prosecution under section 124-A can only be initiated by the Government<sup>1</sup>, but whether the words used are sedition's or not is to be determined by the judge and should not be left to the judgment of the witnesses (PCL,1969).*

*Section 153-A of the penal code punishes for a term up to five year and with fine to whoever promotes or incites disharmony or feelings of enmity, hatred or ill-will between different religious, racial, language or regional groups or casts or communication.*

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*The explanation indicates that the essence of an offence under S. 153-A is malicious intention, and if there is no malicious intention in the publication, honesty of purpose may safely be inferred<sup>2</sup>. If the writer is expressing views which he holds honestly, however, wrong they may be, and has no malicious intention, he cannot be brought within the mischief of S. 153-A in which the Legislature has preserved a delicate balance between the undesirability of anything tending to excite sedition or to excite strife between classes, and the undesirability of preventing any bona fide argument for reform (AIR, 1943)*

*In this connection it may be remembered that the editor of a newspaper has certain public duties, one of which is to publish matters which, it is in the public interest, that it should be known and if he does so honestly, he is evidently not liable to be dealt with by a Criminal Court. Section 153-B was instituted with effect from June 7, 1962 and states that inducing students to take part in political activity is punishable with imprisonment up to two years and /or with fine (Mahmood-1989, p.471).*

*Section 292 states that whoever sells, distributes, publicity exhibits etc. or produces or has in his possession any obscene books and paper etc. shall be punished with imprisonment up to three months and/or fine. The explanation of the section makes certain exceptions as well, in order to preserve art, cultural, historical and religious monuments. The term 'obscene' means offence to chastity or modesty. An obscene thing is that expresses or suggests unchaste and lustful ideas. The test of obscenity is whether the matter tends to deprive and corrupt the*

*minds of people. It may, however, be noted that the concept of obscenity is a relative concept what may appear obscene to one may not appear to other. A matter may be considered to be obscene in one country but not in another, or the same matter may be considered obscene at one time but not in other (Bajwa, 1992). Looking to this relativity, the test would be whether the particular matter in question is in a given period and in a particular society or community, generally considered obscene or not<sup>3</sup>. Section 295-A of Pakistan Penal Code states that whoever outraging the religious feelings of any class, or insults the religion or the*

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*religious beliefs of that class shall be punished with imprisonment up to ten year and. or fine. (Jabbar, and Isa, 1997 p.690).*

*All these sections of Pakistan Penal Code were included in Article 8 of 1956 constitution, Article 9 of 1962 and In Article 19 of 1973 constitution and also all these sections were punishable under Press and Publication Ordinance 1960, (PPO), Press and Publication Ordinance 1963, and Registration of Printing Press and Publication Ordinance 1988.*

*Section 499 deals with defamation and states that whoever publishes any imputation concerning any person intending to harm his reputation in the estimation of others, and lowers the moral or intellectual character of a person is punishable with rigorous imprisonment up to two years and/or with fine (Bajwa-1992, p.475)*

*But anything that is true and in the public good, or express in good faith any opinion regarding the conduct of a public servant in the discharge of his public functions or regarding his character, true reports of the court proceedings, or express any opinion in good faith regarding any case that has been decided by the court, is not defamation. Even then it is incumbent that the journalists should make due inquiry as to the truth of the matter they publish. If they do not, they take the risk of prosecution for defamation. Thus where comment is made on allegations of fact which do not exist, the very foundation of the plea of fair comment disappears. The act of defamation was punishable under PPO, 1960, PPO, 1963. The defamation was also mentioned in Article 19 of 1973 constitution as reasonable restriction on freedom of Press but by an amendment in 1975, the word defamation was omitted from the wording of the article 19 of 1973 constitution. (Jabbar, et al, 1997, p.84.)*

### **1.1 Background**

*As stated earlier that the Penal code enacted in 1860 by foreign rulers is still being followed in Pakistan as law of crimes of the land and the legislature in Pakistan has not so far framed its own penal code. Though a good number of amendments have been made with the need of ever changing conditions of the society but the fact remains that its basic Principles and fundamentals have very little effect of the change." This is due to the fact that in a democratic set-up, laws cannot be enforced unless they enjoy the support or at least the acquiescence of a large majority.*

*But since the process of democracy was not let to continue smoothly and it was interrupted mostly by the military adventurisms, this has also pushed back the process of freedom of the Press. For Instance, General Zia ul Haq on December 18, 1979 promulgated Martial Law Regulation 49 to amend section 499 and 500 of the Pakistan Penal code. The effect of the amendment was that publication of defamatory matter against any person, even if it was true and in the public interest was to constitute a cognisable and compoundable offence punishable with five years rigorous imprisonment or with fine or with both.*

*In the 1860 Laws of Defamation, there had been ten exceptions of which nine were withdrawn with one stroke of pen. The nine deleted exceptions, which had been part of the law for over a century, became lapsed. All these safeguards for Individual and public interest in the law of defamation granted by an imperialist power to its subjects were snatched away by the military rulers of the free land. It is transparently clear that the defamation law was revised at the cost of public interest because the law-makers suffered from a mortal fear of information. In other words, secrecy is safe, only information is dangerous (Niazi-1986).*

*But now it has been increasingly felt during the last several years that our. Present legal system and its administration needs to be overhauled in order to fit new and changed conditions. Law, and the legal system, like anything else in the world is a changing phenomenon.*

*No man-made law can meet the overall needs of changing times and no legal system can ever be considered efficacious for all times. Legal history shows that right from the earliest dispensation, laws and legal system have been constantly revised in order to meet the needs of changing times. It is obvious that each legal system was the product of an evolutionary process and the result of historical forces.*

*The main point is that the British had transplanted in India their own system. They had introduced this legal system with a view to govern this country. In procedure, almost all the main principles were borrowed from English statutes but as the primary object of the foreign rulers was to maintain law and order, the system introduced by them did not suit the genius of the people.*

*Our legal literature is available in English the result is that the bulk of our population does not know law. How can people obey law if they do not know it? For a democratic society, is born out of the aspiration of people and if the link of law and the people is broken, the law turns into an imposed edict from above and soon turns into a tyranny. Therefore, if law has to be successfully carried out, it must come out of the people and must have a living contact with the people. This is only possible if all laws are translated into Urdu and widely disseminated among the people. Ours is an age of specialisation with the growing complications of law; it is the time that we also introduce specialised courts to deal with the cases related to media (Paracha, 1999)*

## **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

1. *To explore the awareness and perception regarding punishment of Pakistan Penal Code*
2. *to see the perception regarding Section 124-A of PPC*
3. *to know the Situation of the press freedom and appropriation of punishment despite Section 124-A of PPC*
4. *to understand the extent the press obeying VS Situation of the press freedom*

## **2.1. Methods**

### **2.1.1 Sample**

*We conducted interviews with the people working as reporters, sub-editors, news editors, chief editors, district correspondents, column, editorial & feature writers, free lancers, radio/TV producers & reporters, sub-editors of print and electronic media and news agencies, government information department and teachers of mass communication in Pakistan.*

### **2.1.2 Procedure**

*A cross-sectional national based survey by using mail questionnaire mode was adopted to explore the perception of special focus group on Pakistan's media policy. Pre test of the revised version was taken in a heterogeneous group of media educationists and practitioners. Quota and purposive sampling method for data collection was adopted. A well standardized questionnaire was developed on Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) pertaining to the Press.*

## **3.1: Results**

### **Historical & Professionals' Paradigm of Pakistan Penal Code Pertaining to the Press**

*The results of the survey conducted to know the perception of the media professionals regarding Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) Sections: 123-A, 124-A, 153-A, 153-B, 292, 295-A, and 500, which are pertaining to the press; and Freedom of Information Act-2002 is presented in following:*

### ***3.1.1: Awareness and perception regarding punishment under Section 123-A of PPC***

*Chi-Square Test  $2 \times 2$  with response choice of 2 with response choice of “Yes” and “No”*

*The results have shown the respondents awareness of the fact that there is punishment of ten years imprisonment and fine on publication of such material, which condemns the creation of Pakistan or advocates the curtailment or abolition of the sovereignty of Pakistan. The result of the  $\chi^2$  significant with  $df=$  of 2 and  $P=0.000$  as alpha calculated value claiming  $4.176 + 5.765 + 5.662 + 7.815 +$  with inference of  $0.115 + 0.158 = 23.691$ . To check the significant difference we prefer level of significance to be set at 0.05. This support the  $H_0$  that the “awareness and perception regarding punishment under Section 123-A of PPC” is highly significant. It also indicated that a highly significant majority of the respondents endorse because the tabulated value was 5.991 that publication of such material should remain as a cognizable crime which clearly the view that punishment of ten years and fine mentioned in the Section 123-A of PPC is appropriate.*

### ***3.1.2: Awareness and perception regarding Section 124-A of PPC***

*Factor Analysis of the Correlation Matrix showed that the target sample of the focus group is not boldly support the supposition with 0.785 as at “yes” and 0.620 at “no” categories. They were found well aware that Section 124-A of PPC punishes with imprisonment for life and probable fine on publication of such material, which is contemptuous to the government. Findings obviously revealed that -0.785 and 0.620 respectively at both the dichotomy scale as significant highlights that section 124-A should not remain as cognizable crime. However, 0.616 and 0.384 of the punishment for life imprisonment and fine is not appropriate are different tendency and found independent of one another (i.e. they are not correlated). The result has proven that scores on these 3 variables are affected by just one common factor that is 1.000.*

3.1.3: “Situation of the press freedom despite Section 124-A of PPC” and “Perception regarding appropriation of punishment under Section 153-A of PPC

$H_0$  Section 124-A of PPC is not different from Section 153-A of PPC

$H_a$  Section 124-A of PPC is different from Section 153-A of PPC

Analysis of Variance

| DF    | SS  | MS     | F     | P     |
|-------|-----|--------|-------|-------|
| 2     | 267 | 267    | 0.01  | 0.924 |
| Error | 4   | 102147 | 25537 |       |
| Total | 5   | 102413 |       |       |

Individual 95% CIs For Mean

Based on Pooled StDev

| Level   | N | Mean  | StDev | -+-----+-----+-----+----- |
|---|---|-------|-------|---------------------------|
| C1  | 3 | 118.3 | 192.9 | (-----*-----)             |
| C2  | 3 | 105.0 | 117.8 | (-----*-----)             |
|   |   |       |       | -+-----+-----+-----+----- |
| Pooled StDev = 159.8      -150      0      150      300 |   |       |       |                           |

Factor “Section 124-A of PPC”, composed on (fully-up to some extent-not at all) and factor “Section 153-A of PPC”, indicates (yes-lesser-more).

Findings (Two way ANOVA) have shown that C1  $n=3$  with  $M=118.3$  and  $StDev$  192.9 and C2 having  $M=105.0$   $StDev$  117.8. The sum of square=267. Mean square=267 F distribution 0.01 P is greater than 0.924. Findings show that the press in Pakistan is performing its function freely despite Section 124-A of PPC and the  $H_0$  is rejected. Where is concerned the Section 153-A of PPC, the result also support the  $H_a$  the PPC is appropriate.

**3.1.4: Awareness and perception regarding punishment under Section 153-A of PPC**

$r \times c$  contingency table  $X^2$  statistical test

Result illustrated the  $Chi-Sq = 1.320 + 5.888 + 1.298 + 5.789 = 14.295$  with  $df=1$ , P-Value = 0.000 which highly signified the fact that there is punishment of 5 years imprisonment and fine under Section 153-A on publication of such material, which promotes disharmony or feeling of enmity, hatred or ill-will among different religious, racial, lingual or regional groups or casts of Pakistan. Findings also support the assumption that the target groups were remained cognizable crime under Section 153-A of PPC.



### 3.1.5: Awareness and perception about punishment under Section 153-B of PPC. (n=355)

$r \times c$  Chi-Square Test

The findings revealed  $\text{Chi-Sq} = 0.218 + 0.200 + 0.214 + 0.197 = 0.828$  with  $\text{df}=1$ , P-Value = 0.363 which showed slightly less significant the “Section of PPC which punishes up to 2 years imprisonment or fine on publication of such material which induces students to take part in political activity”. Moreover, highly significant respondents were who remain as a cognizable crime.

**Figure 1.1: Perception regarding appropriation of punishment under Section 153-B of**

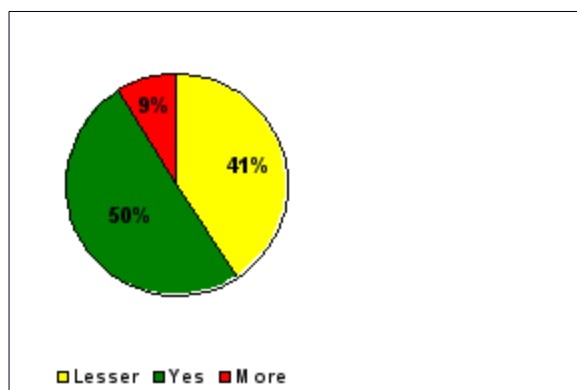


Figure 1.1 shows that merely half of the respondents (50%) feel that punishment under Section 153-B of PPC is appropriate.

### 3.1.6: Perception regarding the extent the press obeying Section 153-B of PPC VS Situation of the press freedom despite Section 153-A of PPC

$H_0$  Press obeying Section 153-B of PPC is equally significantly to press freedom despite Section 153-A of PPC

$H_a$  Press obeying Section 153-B of PPC is not equally significantly to press freedom despite Section 153-A of PPC

Regression Analysis

The column headings  $\text{SS}=59822$ ,  $\text{df}=1$  and  $\text{MS}=59822$  where "SS stand for Sum of Squares", "DF indicates" degrees of freedom", and "MS stands for Mean Square", respectively. The table also reveals that there are 1295 total degrees of freedom. The mean

square error (MS) is defined as the residual sum of squares divided by the corresponding degrees of freedom. The  $R$ -squared ( $R^2$ ) for the regression is 100.0%, and the  $R$ -squared adjusted for degrees of freedom ( $R^2_a$ ) the regression is 100.0%. The standard error for the coefficient on is Press obeying Section 153-B of PPC and press freedom despite Section 153-A of PPC, 59825. The corresponding  $t$  statistic is 0.229, which has a significance level of 0.005 in a two-tailed test and constant  $P=0.069$ . The 95 percent confidence interval for the coefficient is [regression equation is  $[11.7 + 0.901]$ ].

Conclusion: the regression analysis support that there is not equally significant perception that despite Section 153-A of PPC, the press in Pakistan is performing its function freely up to some extent and situation of the press freedom despite Section 153-A of PPC is lesser free.  $H_0$  is rejected.

### **3.1.7: Awareness and perception regarding punishment under Section 292 of PPC**

*The result indicated the  $M=157.5$   $StDev=16.3$   $SE\ M=11.5$  and 95.0% (11.4, 303.6), Section 292 of PPC punishes up to 3 months imprisonment or with fine to one who sells, distributes, publicly exhibits or produces such book or newspaper which contains obscenity. While remain as cognizable crime  $M=20.0$   $StDev=14.1$   $SE\ M=10.0$  (-107.1, 147.1). The findings very clearly reveal the supposition as significant regarding punishment under Section 292 of PPC.*

**Figure 1.2: Perception regarding appropriation of punishment under Section 292 of PPC. (n=314)**

Figure 1.2 indicates that majority (56%) is of the view that the punishment up to 3 months or fine under Section 292 is appropriate.

**Figure 1.3: Perception regarding the extent the press obeying Section 292 of PPC. (n=355)**

Figure 1.3 indicates that highly significant majority of the respondents (73%) think that Pakistani press is obeying Section 292 up to some extent.

**Figure 1.4: Situation of the press freedom despite Section 292 of PPC. (n=355)**

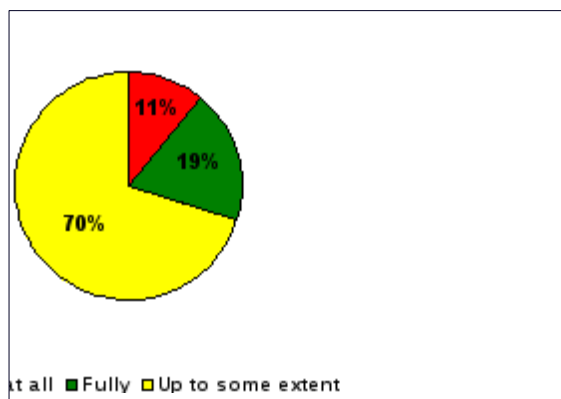
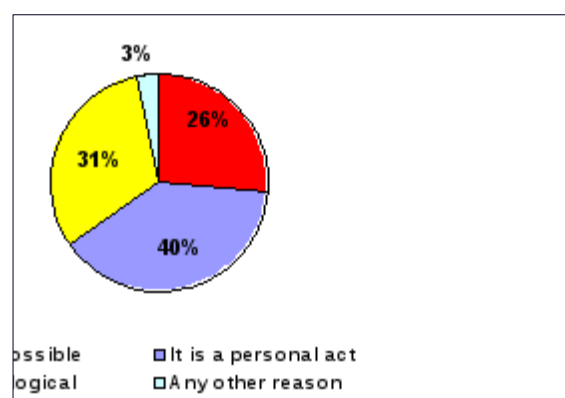


Figure 1.4 reflects the significant majority's (70%) view that despite Section 292 of PPC the press in Pakistan is performing its function freely up to some extent in the promotion of art and culture.

**Figure 1.5: Opinion about watching obscene material on TV, VCR, or Internet should come under purview of Section 292. (n=355)**

Figure 1.5 illustrates that significant majority of the respondents (66%) consider that act of watching obscene material on TV, VCR, Cable, Dish or Internet should also come under the purview of Section 292 of PPC.

**Figure 1.6: Opinion about non restriction of obscene material on electronic media. (n=116)**



The respondents, disagreeing with the significant majority's opinion in figure 1.6 that Section 292 should also restrain watching obscene material on electronic media, argue that it is a personal act (40%), restraint would be illogical (31%), or it would not be possible (26%) to restrain watching obscene material in this age of global media onslaught.

**Table 1.1: Awareness and perception regarding punishment under Section 295-A of PPC.**

|  | Yes | No  | n=  |
|--|-----|-----|-----|
| Punishment on outraging religious feelings | 64% | 36% | 355 |
| Remain as cognizable crime                 | 91% | 09% | 355 |
| Is punishment appropriate?                 | 62% | 38% | 327 |

Table 1.1 guides us that significant majority of the respondents (64%) know that Section 295-A of PPC punishes up to 10 years imprisonment or fine to one who outrages the religious feelings of any class or insults the religion or religious beliefs. Moreover, very vast majority of the respondents (91%) support the view that it should remain as a cognizable crime. The

figures also illustrate that significant majority (62%) feels that 10 years imprisonment or fine under Section 295-A of PPC is appropriate. The findings also reveal that a reasonable number (27%) feel that punishment should be commuted, whereas 11% of the respondents think that it should be more severe.

**Figure 1.7: Perception regarding the extent the press obeying Section 295-A of PPC. (n=355)**

Figure 1.7 shows a significant majority's (68%) view that the press in Pakistan is obeying Section 295-A up to some extent.

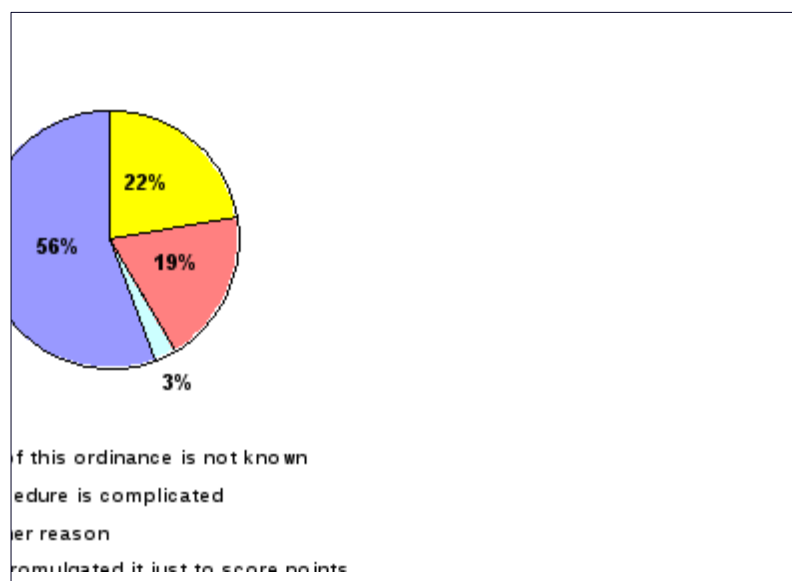
**Table 1.2: Awareness and perception regarding punishment on publication of defamatory material under Section 500 of PPC. (n=355)**

|  | Yes | No  |
|--|-----|-----|
| Awareness about punishment                                   | 67% | 33% |
| Remain as cognizable crime                                   | 90% | 10% |
| Sections of PPC need review to meet present age requirements | 94% | 06% |

Table 1.2 describes that a significant majority (67%) is well aware of the fact that Section 500 of PPC punishes up to 2 years rigorous imprisonment or fine on the publication of any imputation concerning any person intending to harm his reputation in the estimation of others, and lowers the moral or intellectual character of a person. They (90%) are also of the view that publication of defamatory matter should remain as cognizable crime. However, very vast majority (94%) feels that all the Sections of PPC pertaining to the press need to be reviewed to meet the present age requirements.

**Figure 1.8: Perception regarding freedom of information ordinance 2002 for the press freedom. (n=355)**

Figure 1.8 shows a highly significant majority's (74%) perception that in spite promulgation of Freedom of Information Ordinance-2002, there seems no apparent improvement in the press freedom.



**Figure 1.9: Perception regarding Freedom of Information Ordinance-2002 for not improving the press freedom. (n=258)**

Figure 1.9 shows that majority of the respondents (56%) are of the view that promulgation of the Freedom of Information Ordinance-2002 is just an attempt to score the points and increase the fame of the government. Some respondents (22%) feel that its detail is not known while some other (19%) say that its procedure is complicated, while 3% respondents mentioned other reasons such as that the said ordinance is related to official information and not to the press only.

#### 4.1. Discussion

Commenting on Sections of Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) pertaining to media, the experts were of the view that no government could afford to become weaker that is why Section 124-A of Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) does not need any omission or amendment. Regarding Section 153-B they were of the view that it should not be omitted on the plea that it did not come in

action. In contrast, the other view was that it should not only be omitted but the students should also be allowed to take active part in politics.

Moreover, findings of the study revealed a complete agreement among experts that the suggestion given by a court in 1990, that watching obscene material on TV/VCR should come under the purview of Section 292 of PPC, is neither workable nor appropriate in this age of easy access to media. However, the problem of obscenity in TV programmes is controllable through technological devices meant for the purpose.

On the question of the press court of honor to expedite the cases related to the media, it was revealed that as per decision of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, no parallel Judiciary can be established.

### **5.1. Conclusion**

The law experts not only justified that violation of Section 124-A of PPC should remain as a cognizable crime, but also justified the punishment of life imprisonment on the plea that to contempt the government is a very severe crime.

In contrast significant majority of respondents was of the firm view that violation of the section should not be considered as a cognizable crime and the punishment is also absolutely inappropriate and unjustifiable.

Findings pertaining to Section 153-B of PPC illustrated that majority of the respondents did not know about two years punishment on violation of the Section along with fine for inducing students into politics, moreover highly significant majority was not ready to consider the violation as cognizable crime. Conversely the law experts remarked that non registration of any case did not mean that it should be omitted from PPC and also the presence of such section did not mean that it must be invoked. If law was not being violated it indicates maturity on the part of the society. In contrast, the other view was that it should not only be omitted but the students should also be allowed to take active part in politics.

The empirical findings addressing Section 292 revealed that watching of obscene material on T.V, VCR or Internet should come under the purview of Section 292 as it was suggested by a Judge of a High Court in 1990 that, “the exhibition or displaying of a foreign/objectionable film is an offence yet the act of seeing such film is not punishable. Lest this Judgment is misunderstood, let it be added that from the moral point of view, the court have not approved the act of seeing obscene, immoral, objectionable film on TV/VCR, the court simply

interpreted and applied the law of the land as it is. Court is obliged to administer justice within the corners of the code and according to the cannon of the law regardless of consequences. The court was convinced that unless amendment is made in the relevant law restraining act of seeing foreign/obscene/uncertified films, the person seeing such films on TV/VCR is not criminally punishable. So, the legislature may in its wisdom make suitable amendment to bring the seeing of such films on VCR within the purview of criminal liability".

The law experts were of the view that if someone was watching such objectionable in privacy then how the law could be successfully enforced. However, the problem of obscenity in TV programmes can be controlled through technological devices meant for the purpose. It was further observed that very vast majority of the respondents believed that Sections of PPC pertaining to the press should be reviewed to extend the press freedom, whereas the official circles believed that more freedom might provide more chances to the press for blackmailing. It was further observed that majority of the respondents thought that promulgation of the Freedom of Information Ordinance -2002 was just to score points by the government and highly significant majority has not felt any improvement in situation of the press freedom. The DG (IP) was of the view that the purpose was not to score the points but to meet the present age demand. In view of this discussion it is suggested that all the sections of PPC particularly those related to the Press need to be improved and may be framed in accordance with the requirement of independent, democratic modern state (Paracha, 2007).

### **Recommendations**

Respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist. The journalist shall at all times defend the principles of freedom in the honest collection and publication of news, and of the right to fair comment and criticism. Within the general law of each country the journalist shall recognize in matters of professional matters the jurisdiction of colleagues only, to the exclusion of any kind of interference by governments or others. The right to know should not be taken away from the people of Pakistan. The liberty and safety of journalists and editorial independence are principles of press freedom that we hold as sacrosanct and non-negotiable . . .



Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media, and regardless of frontiers. The Press, Newspapers, News Agencies and Books Registration (Amendment) Ordinance, 2007, and the PEMRA (Third Amendment) Ordinance, 2007, must be revoked to allow a return to the relatively free media environment that had been developing in Pakistan in recent years. All political candidates are urged to commit to the withdrawal of the anti-media laws regardless of who holds government, and to pledge support for a strong charter of rights guaranteeing basic media freedoms, without fear or favor. All electronic media must be promptly permitted to present all activities without any hindrance.

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